

**Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Barbara Smith and I am a registered voter in the City of Stamford. I am here to testifying in regards to HB6659.

I became a member of Bridge House in June 2021. The reason I came to Bridge House was because I was suffering from depression. I was told they were there to give people with mental illnesses a sense of purpose, focus, and self-esteem.

I feel lucky because at Bridge House I have been given a multitude of tasks that completes that mission. I do data entry, and reception work in the Membership Services Unit. I also enjoy setting tables in our dining room in our culinary arts unit. When I go home I feel like I have achieved something important. I have a sense of accomplishment.

There is always something to keep me busy, and to make me feel purposeful and focused. All of these things add to increase my self-esteem. I have made friends and begun to socialize more.

I feel like my case manager really understands me and knows when I am not feeling well. Especially during those times, she calls and checks up on me. I also feel that if I did not have Bridge House I would be sitting at home doing nothing.

Please consider increasing funding to Bridge House and mental health programs like it. Thank you very much for reading my testimony.